

INFORMATION PAPER

CEMP-CP
7 April 1997

SUBJECT: Partnering in Construction Contracting

1. Purpose. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update of partnering information to District Commanders.

2. Facts.

a. The most widespread practice which has been put underway in the area of partnerships is the use of partnering techniques during the construction phase of a project. The concept was introduced in the late 80's as a practice to be considered for optional district level implementation. The Chief of Engineers later decided to institutionalize the partnering concept in the Corps of Engineers and issued a major policy letter on the subject in February 1992. The current policy of the Corps is that partnering principles will be used in all construction contracting and the concept is to be applied to all other business relationships, both external and internal to the organization.

b. The process creates a new team building environment which fosters better communication and problem solving, and a mutual trust between the participants. These key elements create a climate in which issues can be raised, openly discussed, and jointly settled, without getting into an adversarial relationship. Through this process of teamwork and problem solving on a construction project, the Corps goals are in the areas of Safety, Quality, Schedule, Budget, and Disputes. We want the quality of the work to be right the first time, the project to be completed on time, the final cost to be within budget, and disputes/litigation to be minimized. The goals of the contractor are very similar, thus the process benefits both parties through the teamwork and pursuit of mutual goals. The use of formal and informal partnering techniques now has widespread use across the Corps during the construction phase of our projects, and has been adopted by many other Federal, state, and local agencies based on the Corps success.

c. A Partnering Steering Group has been established at the Headquarters with the membership made up of the Deputy Directors of Military Programs and Civil Works, and the principals of all other offices. The charter of the Group is to promote the use of partnering and alternate dispute resolution throughout the organization through written guidance, training, and the distribution of lessons-learned information.

d. The Corps of Engineers received Vice President Gore's Hammer Award in 1995 for furthering the use of partnering. Partnering has been endorsed by the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) and a number of other industry organizations. Partnering agreements have been executed between the Corps and the American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC), the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), the Associated

General Contractors of America (AGC), the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Hazardous Waste Action Coalition (HWAC), the Design-Build Institute of America and the National Association of Women In Construction (NAWIC). These agreements outline a commitment to the mutual goals of the organizations. As partnering has become more popular, partnering relationships are now becoming more common between design engineers and the Corps prior to the actual construction phase of the work, thus adding a new dimension to the achievement of mutual goals during design development.

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e. While not yet perfect, partnering has begun to change the Corps culture. The results have been a steady decline in claims and appeals to the board, and numerous success stories on projects where partnering has been applied. The enhanced communication and cooperative spirit on projects has led to more timely problem solving and an overall improvement in relationships with contractors. We have heard from the contractors that the concept is not being uniformly applied across the Corps and on smaller projects. The challenge is to extend and sustain the effort and to make partnering a part of the Corps culture. We see this happening as the process becomes more familiar to people and partnering techniques are carried forward on small as well as the larger projects. There are opportunities for the expanded use of partnering in the environmental arena, and we recently published the DOD Environmental Partnering Guide in order to point out the benefits of using this tool. The Chief of Engineers recently issued a major policy memorandum on the subject of partnering which outlined his commitment to have partnering principles applied at every opportunity.

3. This information paper has been approved by BG Phillip Anderson, Director of Military Programs.

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